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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a unique library fund raiser at California State University (Northridge). "A Trial for the Books" was a dog agility trial held on April 26-27, 1996 as a benefit for the university's Oviatt Library. The event was hosted by West Valley DogSports, a community group. The event raised approximately $2,500 for the library's collection, with minimal commitment of library staff time and energy. Dog agility is a competitive event in which competitors seek to achieve titles for performances meeting specific standards set by recognized dog organizations. Local businesses and others with an interest in dog agility were offered advertising in the event's printed catalogs in exchange for a donation to the Friends of the Oviatt Library. Other companies donated items necessary for the trial, thereby reducing the expense of putting on the event. Additional funds were raised through a donation program known as the Honored Scholar Dogs. In exchange for a donation by their owners, dogs were honored on a special list in the event's printed catalogs. This event serves as a model of how other community interest groups might find ways to hold mutually beneficial events in conjunction with the library. Appendices include letters and forms used to solicit donations. (Author/SWC).

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Community Group Involvement in a Fund Raising Project for a University Library: Examples from *A Trial for the Books*

By:

Mary M. Finley

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Community Group Involvement in a Fund Raising Project for a University Library: Examples from *A Trial for the Books*

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How much grass do you have? It is likely that your library's most recent statistical report did not include the square footage of level lawn adjacent to the building. But, if you are interested in fund raising for a library, all elements of the library environment are important and should be considered in your fund raising plans. Make a list of what you have, both inside the building and in the outside environment. What are the library's needs and what incentives or recognition can you offer to donors? Then match what you have to offer with the needs of groups and/or individuals in your community to identify potential mutual-benefit fund raising opportunities.

This type of analysis led to a unique fund raiser at California State University, Northridge. *A Trial for the Books* was a dog agility trial held on April 26-27, 1996 as a benefit for the university's Oviatt Library. The event was hosted by West Valley DogSports, a community group with members who ordinarily would have only a passive interest in contributing to the library. The event was enjoyed by spectators as well as participants and received color-picture press coverage in the *Los Angeles Times* as well as mention in articles in *American Libraries, Library Hotline* and *C&RL News.* The Oviatt Library is the first library in the United States to use a dog agility competition as a fund raiser. The event raised approximately $2,500.00 for the library's collection, with minimal commitment of library staff time and energy. One of the university's upper division psychology classes in animal behavior came to observe the dogs in action and talk to the owners who train the talented canines. The leaders of West Valley DogSports, the community group which did almost all the work involved in putting on the fund raiser, wanted to do it again--and did in April 1997. By a variety of criteria, this fund raising effort was a success.

Dog agility is a competitive event. *A Trial for the Books* was sanctioned by both the North American Dog Agility Council and the Australian Shepherd Club of America, meaning that competitors

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sought to achieve titles which recognize performances meeting specific standards for their dogs from those organizations. There are dog agility clubs like West Valley DogSports in many parts of the nation whose purpose is to promote the sport and to host trials, the technical name for dog agility competitions, so that their members can have the fun of competing at such events. The Oviatt Library would not have had the expertise to host a dog agility trial on its own. However, the library's lawn met site requirements for such events and the library offered recognition to event winners.

The competitions which West Valley DogSports hosts normally offer fancy ribbon rosettes for first through fourth place winners in each of dozens of event categories and a dog toy or other item as a trophy for first place winners. The cost for these ribbons and trophies often runs between eight hundred to two thousand dollars for a weekend of dog agility competition.

The university library had a great need for additional funds and had an established fund-giving program which included placing a bookplate in a book to honor a donation over a specified minimum. West Valley DogSports developed a plan to give relatively inexpensive certificates instead of ribbon rosettes to placement winners. First place winners also were honored by having their names listed on bookplates placed in new library books. Hence every competitor who would normally receive special recognition received it. But instead of spending the funds usually budgeted for recognition expenses on ribbon rosettes and trophies, the funds were donated to the library for the purchase of books on dogs and animal behavior.

The event was held on the grass in front of the Oviatt Library to highlight the beneficiary of the fund-raising effort. This was particularly appropriate as the library building and the buildings around it suffered massive damage from the 1994 Northridge Earthquake. Repairs are not expected to be complete until the year 2000 on this campus which was at the epicenter of the strong earthquake.

Local businesses and others with an interest in dog agility were offered advertising in the event's printed catalogs in exchange for a donation to the Friends of the Oviatt Library, the library's support group. Other companies donated items necessary for the trial, thereby reducing the expense of putting on the event. Additional

funds were raised through a donation program which became known as the Honored Scholar Dogs. In exchange for a donation by their owners, dogs were honored on a special list in the event's printed catalogs.

Since *A Trial for the Books* successfully raised funds, some of the letters and forms used to solicit donations are likely to be of interest to others seeking to raise money for their library. These are attached to this report as appendices.

There is a moral from this fund raiser in these times in which almost every library needs additional funding. Many professional fund-raisers urge institutions to look for the big donor and dismiss smaller-goal projects as being more effort than warranted by the results. It is fine to look for donors who can make large donations, but you have to meet a donor before they will give you money, be the amount involved large or small. A potential donor must have enough disposable income to be able to make a donation. Also, you must give donors a reason why they should want to give you money as well as why they should have loyalty and commitment to your institution. Long-term successful fund raising is predicated on building loyalty and commitment to an institution. It is a simple fact that estates are willed to people, institutions, and causes that one becomes committed to in one's lifetime. In academic environments, this loyalty is most often to an academic program or athletic endeavor rather than to the library.

West Valley DogSports members and the competitors at *A Trial for the Books* were predisposed by their socioeconomic background to support the concept of universities, libraries and books as good things. However, the genius of this event was that it found a way to make what the members of West Valley DogSports already wanted to do for their own reasons, i.e. to put on a dog agility trial, also support this specific library's needs. The club got a site for its event, recognition for winners, and spectators. The library got a donation as well as more community members exposed to its needs. It got more community members participating in its fund-raising efforts, the first steps of commitment to an institution.

This event serves as a model of how other community interest groups might also find ways to have events of mutual benefit in conjuction with the library. The possibilities are there to be explored by any library which sincerely wishes to become involved in meeting

community needs while simultaneously raising additional funds for its own needs. Libraries that limit their fund raising horizons to the cultural crowd ignore the demographics of other community interest groups who could become important partners in raising additional funds for the library's needs.

References

Bond, Ed. "Dueling Dogs Do More Than Play Dead". *Los Angeles Times* (April 22, 1996 FCC edition): B2.

"Dogs Raise Money for CSU Library". *C&RL News*, vol. 57, no. 7 (July-August 1996): 414

Goldberg, Beverly. "Money Matters". *American Libraries*, vol. 27, no. 1 (January 1997): 22.

"Innovative Library Fundraisers Involve Books, Food and Dogs". Library Hotline, vol. 25, no. 24 (June 17,1996): 4-5.

Appendices:

A Trial for the Books letter to local businesses requesting donations

Honored Scholar Dogs application

West Valley DogSports

P.O. Box 370206
Reseda, CA 91337

(818) 734-WVDS

March 15, 1996

West Valley DogSports will be holding a two day dog agility trial, ***A Trial for the Books,*** on April 20-21, at California State University, Northridge. Every business that makes a donation of $20.00 or more to The Friends of the Oviatt Library in response to this letter will be honored as a corporate sponsor. A business card from each corporate sponsor will be reproduced (in black and white) in the catalog used during the agility trial and in the final results catalog. Donations to The Friends of the Oviatt Library* are tax deductible (to the full extent of the law).

Dog agility is a rapidly growing sport which is fun for dogs, their owners, and spectators. Many dogs, purebreds and mixed breeds, will compete in this trial. All profits from the trial will be donated to the Oviatt Library at CSUN to acquire printed and electronic materials on dogs and related subjects. We believe that you and your business will benefit by being recognized as a sponsor of this event.

The Oviatt Library was severely damaged in the Northridge Earthquake. Even now, parts of its building remain closed due to structural damage. Because the Oviatt Library is the only large library in the San Fernando Valley, it is used by many students and members of the community on a regular basis. We welcome you to join us in helping this library.

Please send a check for $20.00 or more, payable to The Friends of the Oviatt Library, and the business card that you would like reproduced in the catalogs to:

Paul Kirk, Trial Secretary
9358 Wystone Avenue
Northridge, CA 91324-2835

before April 9, 1996. Your entire donation will go directly to benefit the Oviatt Library. We thank you in advance for your support of our community and the Oviatt Library. We'd love to see you at the trial too!

*If you would like additional information about The Friends of the Oviatt Library and their programs, you can contact them at (818) 885-2638

Shouldn't Your Dog Be An Honored Scholar Dog?

West Valley DogSports knows that you and your dog have learned a lot together. You can honor yourself (or other people) anytime in a variety of ways, but we think that this would be an ideal opportunity for your dog to get public recognition for what it has learned and any titles it has earned in all types of dog competition (agility, obedience, whatever). So, we've created the Honored Scholar Dog List.

We welcome you to join us in helping Oviatt Library. Make a donation of $10.00 or more for your first dog in the form of a check payable to **The Friends of the Oviatt Library** (pack discount=additional donation of $5.00 or more for each additional dog you wish to honor). The name of your dog with all titles will be included on a special Honored Scholar Dogs List in both the running order catalog and in the final results catalog distributed to all competitors and selected dog training clubs. Donations to The Friends of the Oviatt Library are tax deductible (to the full extent of the law). Your entire donation will go to benefit the Oviatt Library. Your support of our community and the Oviatt Library is deeply appreciated.

The following dog deserves to be an HONORED SCHOLAR DOG:

_____

(Print dog's name as you wish it to appear--it can be call name, registered name with all titles, whatever you would like)

Additional pack members to be honored as **HONORED SCHOLAR DOGS:**

_____

_____

_____

A check payable to The Friends of the Oviatt Library for $_____is enclosed.

Please send the check along with this form to:

Paul Kirk
9358 Wystone Ave.
Northridge, CA 91324-2835

If you would like additional information about the Friends of the Oviatt Library and their programs, you can contact them at (818) 885-2638.